

Cemetery Project Summary

In 2009 the Oxford City Council began the process of looking for a new cemetery site. At that time, out of the four cemeteries in Oxford, Rose Hill and Headington were already closed to new burials. Botley had 1,050 graves available and Wolvercote Cemetery had 1,031 available.

Nearly 9 years on the Council is still looking for a suitable site. Meanwhile Wolvercote Cemetery is nearing its closure (early 2018), leaving Botley as the only operational cemetery within Oxford. Taking in to consideration our current burial rate and available space in Botley, we estimate the cemetery will be full by 2021. This will leave the Council without a space to bury the deceased of Oxford.

In 2009 there were 9 potential sites for a cemetery within the Oxford city boundary on land owned by the Council. Desktop surveys found 6 sites were unsuitable due to their location in floodplain zones. This left:

1. Five mile recreational ground,
2. land at the foot hills of Shotover (adjacent to old Court House site, suggested by OPT) and
3. land adjacent to Horspath sports ground (The site currently under discussion)

The Council enlisted the services of Cemetery Development Services (CDS) to carry out physical testing at these sites to confirm their viability. Before any decision can be taken with regards to future cemetery space a number of serious considerations have to be made. These considerations can be summed up under the headings below:

- Environmental concerns. Soil type and other geological factors.
- Existing infrastructure such as roadways, paths, availability of water and other utilities.
- Existence of nearby groundwater such as water courses, rivers and streams. The Environment Agency requires water table readings from a wet and dry season. Landscape factors such as hills, slopes, wooded areas etc.
- Public access from main routes. Public transport routes.
- Biodiversity and Wildlife habitats.
- Conservation areas.

Borehole tests at the three sites ruled out the use of Five Mile recreational ground and the land at the foot hills of Shotover, water was found at 3 feet and above. This left the Council's only viable option as the land adjacent to Horspath sports ground. However this land was ruled out because of a covenant administered by the Oxford Preservation Trust.

As we had exhausted the search for Council owned sites, we extended our search to include land we would need to purchase and land further away from the city. This search returned two potential sites to the North and North East of Oxford. Both pieces of land are privately owned and would require the Council to spend a considerable sum of money. Also there is reluctance from a landowner to sell to the Council which would mean we would have to use compulsory purchase powers.

Currently we are facing a situation where even if land was purchased in 2018 the cemetery would not be fit for purpose until 2023 leaving a gap of 2 years where no burials could take place. Land would need to be designed and developed in to a cemetery which would include installing: roads, paths, landscaping and buildings.

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